



State Representative

Brett Hulsey

78th Assembly District

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Representative Brett Hulsey
(608) 266-7521

WI Strip Mining Company Found Substance Related to 80 Cases of Miner Cancer—

MN Study Shows More Cancer, Heart Disease from Taconite Strip Mining

Madison, WI — Today a Wisconsin strip mine company admitted in the [Wisconsin State Journal](#) to finding asbestos-like fibers that have been linked to 80 cases of cancer in iron miners, according to a report released by Representative Brett Hulsey (Madison). The University of Minnesota Taconite Workers Health Study found exposure to taconite dust lead to higher cases of lung and mesothelioma cancer, and heart disease.

“These new findings show that Governor Walker’s strip mine will threaten our workers health in addition to threatening our northern Wisconsin lakes, rivers, and tourism jobs,” said Representative Hulsey, a member of the Assembly Tourism Committee.

The Taconite Workers Health Study [2013 Progress Report to the Minnesota Legislature](#) found:

- “The cause-of-death investigation revealed that three important diseases are present in numbers that are higher than expected. These include mesothelioma, lung cancer and cardiovascular disease. Mesothelioma was present nearly 200% higher than expected. Lung cancer was higher than expected by 20% and heart disease by 11%.”
- “Workers also had evidence of pleural abnormalities. These were present in 17% of those screened, part of which is likely to be related to exposure to asbestiform EMP. Spouses did not appear to have elevations in either of these two lung conditions, suggesting the lack of dust-related diseases in the non-working Range population.”
- “This assessment revealed that the longer people worked in the taconite industry, the higher their risk for mesothelioma. The risk went up by about 3% per year worked in those with more, compared to those with less, work time.”

“This is one more reason for the DNR to deny the permit to allow this strip mine to threaten our workers, families and environment,” said Hulsey, whose father died from mesothelioma.

The Taconite Workers Health Study was funded by the State of Minnesota and began in 2008. The study is being conducted in response to earlier findings by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), which described an apparent excess of mesothelioma within a cohort of iron ore industry workers. The cohort originated from work done at the University of Minnesota (UMN) in the 1980s, which attempted to identify all workers in the iron ore industry, and included around 72,000 individuals.

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